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ABSTRACT

One hundred twenty-six counselor education students, differentiated according to counselor education status and sex, were studied for differences in attitudes toward self, most people, most clients, and purposes as a counselor. Practicum students completing their educational program were more positive in their counseling-related attitudes than major and non-major students at the introductory course level. As a group, the women students were more positive in their counseling-related attitudes than the men students. Practicum students showed no significant attitude change at the end of practicum; when differentiated according to supervisors' ratings and sex; nor one year later. However, a year later there was a tendency toward a decrease in positiveness of counseling-related attitudes. Comparisons are made with effective school counselors and implications for the selection and training of counselors. (Author)

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COUNSELOR CHARACTERISTICS AND ATTITUDES: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SELECTION AND TRAINING OF EFFECTIVE COUNSELORS

Mozelle V. Jackson

Research pertaining to counselor effectiveness suggests more successful counselors possess certain characteristics and attitudes that differentiate them from least successful counselors. Trained school counselors from the University of Tennessee, differentiated according to sex and counselor effectiveness, were studied for differences on cognitive flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, and attitudes toward self, most people, most clients, and counseling (Jackson & Thompson, 1972). All of the counselors were similar in cognitive flexibility and tolerance of ambiguity, but the most effective counselors were more positive in their counseling-related attitudes than the least effective counselors. Both effective and least effective female counselors were more positive than male counselors toward counseling-related attitudes. Attitudes toward most people, most clients, and counseling differentiated the two counselor effectiveness groups and male and female counselors.

Utilizing the same attitude measure as that in Jackson and Thompson's study (1972), attitudes of counselor education students (N=126) at Northern Illinois University were investigated (Jackson, 1971). The students, differentiated according to counselor education status and sex, showed the practicum students (N=42) completing their program to be more positive in their counseling-related attitudes than major (N=42) and non-major (N=42) students at the introductory course level on both the evaluative and activity dimensions of the semantic differential. As a group, the women were more positive in their counseling-related attitudes than the men students on the evaluative

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factor only. The concepts MOST PEOPLE, MYSELF, MOST CLIENTS, and MY PURPOSES AS A COUNSELOR differentiated the counselor education student groups and sex groups (See Tables 1 and 2).

Attitudes of the counseling practicum students only (N=63) were not significantly different at the end of the practicum. However, the students showed more positive views toward self and purposes as a counselor than toward most people and most clients at the end of the practicum experience. When grouped according to supervisors' ratings of A (capable of functioning as a counselor in a school setting without supervision) and B (supervision as a counselor in a school setting recommended), no significant difference in the attitude scores of the two groups was indicated. Although there was no significant difference in the attitudes of the practicum students one year later (N=37), there was a tendency toward a decrease in positiveness of counseling-related attitudes. There appeared to be more of a decrease in positiveness of attitude toward self. A-rated students tended to be more positive than B-rated students in their counseling attitudes, particularly toward self (See Table3). The counselor trainees a year later were more similar to the most effective, on-the-job female counselors (Jackson & Thompson, 1972) in their counseling-related attitudes. The mean score of the women counselors was the same as that of the most effective female counselors whereas the mean attitude score of the men counselor trainees and the most effective men counselors was not the same (See Table 4).

In each of the investigations of counselor attitudes the concepts MYSELF, MOST PEOPLE, MOST CLIENTS, and MY PURPOSES AS A COUNSELOR were signigicantly different from each other. The concepts MOST PEOPLE and MOST CLIENTS were less positive throughout the research of counseling-related

attitudes of trained school counselors and counselor trainees (See Table 3). Those two concepts differentiated the most effective from the least effective counselors on both the evaluative and activity dimensions of the semantic differential (Jackson & Thompson, 1972). Counselors who view and act toward most people and most clients as being friendly, able, worthy and self as more identified, enough, and revealing apparently tend to be more successful.

The attitudinal studies with trained school counselors and counselor trainees cut across geographical region, all educational levels, and various minority groups. Results of the investigations support the view that attitudes toward self, most people, most clients, and counseling are important counselor attributes that have implications for the selection and training of potentially more effective counselors. Counselor effectiveness during training is related to on-the-job counselor attitudes toward self, most people, most clients, and counseling (Jackson & Thompson, 1972). Apparently, as a group women do tend to possess more positive attitudes related to counselor success than men as a group. However, during counselor education programs men appear to reach a level of positiveness of attitudes similar to the women that is maintained a year later. Research indicates that change during counselor training is minimal, and changes that do occur are not persistent; also, students tend to revert to their former attitudes (Munger, Brown, & Needham, 1964; Patterson, 1968; Rochester, 1967). The tendency for women counselor trainees, a year after training, to revert to counseling-related attitudes similar to the most effective, on-the-job women counselors suggests the influence of aspects of the job situation. Possibly, the shock of on-the-job attitudes and practices toward women, a factor in the women's equality movement, attributes to the more immediate reversion in female counselor trainee attitudes.

Since persistent attitude change is difficult to achieve even with as much attention given to personal attitude change and self-analysis as to counseling techniques, counselor education programs might do well to focus more on the selection process. Many schools do emphasize the selection of counselor trainees as much as the training aspects of their program, and some schools are undertaking experimental programs to enhance their selection procedures in order to meet the needs of minority groups and women. Therefore, there is more flexibility in academic requirements as well as consideration of effective personality factors and attitudinal biases. Recognition is being given to the fact that attitudes learned early in life that mold one's personality almost always remain the same. Effective counselors possess effective personalities characterized by traits as warm, serious, venturesome, realistic, trusting, analytical, and relaxed (Jackson & Thompson, 1972).

A seemingly tight employment market now makes possible a greater concern for quality rather than quanity of counselors for the field of counseling and guidance. Counselors with more effective personalities and more positive counseling-related attitudes are more likely to be adept at bridging the gap in communication between persons from differing cultural backgrounds and are more likely to achieve success with a greater variety of clients.

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Table 1

Summary of Analysis of Variance of Attitude Scores on the Semantic Differential for Two Student Groups in Counselor Education

Source	Degrees of Freedom	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F
Student Groups (A)	2	1887.93332	943.96655	29.4356*
Student Sex (B)	1	662.86697	662.86694	20.6701*
Concepts (C)	3	13321.58933	4440.52734	138.4685*
AxB	2	110.86182	55.43091	1.7285
AxC	6	213.94159	35.65692	1.1119
BxC	3	64.42096	21.47365	0.6697
AxBxC	6	204.27734	34.04622	1.0616
Error	480	15393.05078	32.06885	
Total	503	31858.93359		

*$p < .001$

Table 2

Significant Differences Between Student Groups
on Semantic Differential Concepts (Evaluative Factor)

Concept	Group Means			t	Omega
Most People	PM(38.6)	vs.	MM(34.6)	2.35**	.11
	PM(38.6)	vs.	NMM(32.2)	3.82***	.24
	PW(39.4)	vs.	MM(34.6)	3.16***	.16
	PW(39.4)	vs.	NMM(32.2)	4.87***	.34
	PW(39.4)	vs.	NMW(36.1)	2.01*	.06
	MW(38.2)	vs.	MM(34.6)	2.56**	.11
	MW(38.2)	vs.	NMM(32.2)	4.40***	.30
	NMW(36.1)	vs.	NMM(32.2)	2.67**	.13
Myself	PM(44.6)	vs.	MM(37.6)	4.77***	.33
	PM(44.6)	vs.	NMM(39.3)	3.74***	.22
	PW(45.9)	vs.	MM(37.6)	5.38***	.39
	PW(45.9)	vs.	NMM(39.3)	4.42***	.30
	PW(45.9)	vs.	MW(41.3)	2.65**	.12
	NMW(43.0)	vs.	MM(37.6)	2.82***	.12
	PM(44.6)	vs.	MW(41.3)	1.97*	.04
	MW(41.3)	vs.	MM(37.6)	1.86*	.04
Most Clients	PM(36.4)	vs.	MM(31.5)	2.33**	.11
	PM(36.4)	vs.	NMM(30.1)	3.25***	.18
	PM(36.4)	vs.	NMW(32.4)	1.95*	.04
	PW(34.8)	vs.	NMM(30.1)	2.78***	.12
	MW(34.1)	vs.	NMM(30.1)	2.11*	.06
My Purposes As A Counselor	PM(47.4)	vs.	MM(43.6)	2.80***	.13
	PW(51.3)	vs.	PM(47.4)	3.48***	.20
	PW(51.3)	vs.	MM(43.6)	5.56***	.41
	PW(51.3)	vs.	MW(47.3)	2.65***	.12
	PW(51.3)	vs.	NMM(45.1)	3.54***	.21
	PW(51.3)	vs.	NMW(45.0)	3.32***	.20
	MW(47.3)	vs.	MM(43.6)	2.15*	.06

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$

Note: PM = Practicum Men Students; PW = Practicum Women Students
MM = Major Men Students; MW = Major Women Students
NMM = Non-Major Men Students; NMW = Non-Major Women Students

Table 3

Semantic Differential Means (Evaluative Factor) on Four Concepts for Trained School Counselors and Counselor Trainees

Groups	Concepts				
	Most People	My Self	Most Clients	Counseling Purpose	Total
Trained School Counselors (N=73)	36	40	34	42	38
Most Effective (N=39	38	41	35	42	39
Least Effective (N=34)	34	39	32	41	36
Counselor Trainees (N=126)	36	42	33	46	39
Practicum Students (N=42)	39	45	35	49	42
Beginning Students (N=42)	36	39	32	45	38
Non-Major Students (N=42)	34	41	31	45	38
Practicum Students					
Pre (N=63)	38	42	35	48	41
Post (N=63)	38	45	35	50	42
A-rated (N=40)	40	45	36	49	42
B-rated (N=21)	38	45	35	51	42
Practicum Students One Year Later	37	42	33	48	40
A-rated (N=25)	38	43	34	48	40
B-rated (N=12)	36	40	32	47	38

NOTE: Effectiveness ratings and A-B ratings by supervisors during training.

Table 4

Semantic Differential Means (Evaluative Factor) on Four Concepts for Male-Female Trained School Counselors and Counselor Trainees

Groups		Concepts				
		Most People	My Self	Most Clients	Counseling Purpose	Total
Trained School Counselors (N=73)						
Men (N=45)		35	39	32	41	36
Women (N=28)		37	40	36	43	39
Most Effective (N=39)		38	41	35	42	39
Men (N=23)		37	40	33	41	38
Women (N=16)		38	41	36	44	40
Least Effective (N=34)		34	39	32	41	36
Men (N=22)		33	38	30	40	35
Women (N=12)		36	40	34	42	38
Counselor Trainees (N=126)		36	42	33	46	40
Men (N=63)		35	41	32	45	38
Women (N=63)		38	43	34	48	41
Practicum Students (N=63)						
Men (N=38)	Pre	38	41	36	46	40
	Post	38	45	36	48	42
Women (N=25)	Pre	40	44	34	50	42
	Post	39	45	35	52	42
One Year Later (N=37)						
Men (N=20)		37	42	34	47	40
Women (N=17)		38	42	32	48	40

NOTE: effectiveness rating by supervisors during training.